

To Whom It May Concern:

I am sharing my thoughts today because I am deeply concerned with the cuts being proposed to funding to essential services at Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC). I am a clinical psychologist who trained in 2014-2015 as a fellow at the Yale Department of Psychiatry at CMHC. I consider my training there to be the most essential experience to the formation of my professional identity as a psychologist in public service. This is why I am asking you today to reconsider carrying through these cuts.

While completing my psychology fellowship at CMHC, I was exposed to the full continuum of care in a community mental health setting. My incredible supervisors there showed me how to deliver recovery-oriented, client-centered, evidence-based care to those in our community who are often the most vulnerable. My time there was essential in sharpening my skills as a care provider, innovator, and lifelong learner. In short, it is where I cultivated my passion for providing mental health services in the public sector. I know for a fact that I am not the only person with these sentiments, as I know many people whose passion for and skill in this work were honed at CMHC. In a nation that is consistently chipping away at services for people who experience mental illness and substance use, CMHC was a beacon of opportunity to those of us interested in how to work effectively and create change in the world of community mental health. I carry with me the lessons I learned through my many experiences at CMHC, just as I continue to benefit from the relationships I developed there with supervisors, mentors, and peers who will remain influential for the life of my career.

The loss of training opportunities for fellows and residents is not the only aspect of these cuts that concern me, however. My time at CMHC, which took place even before the most recent cuts to the DMHAS budget, indicated to me that the facility was in need of more resources to care for clients, rather than less. Reducing the number of staff will inevitably reduce quantity and quality of services as clinicians' time and skill is stretched across an increasing number of clients. Providing care for people in acute distress due to mental illness or substance misuse takes consideration, time, and collaboration. If resources are depleted, I know that the people CMHC serves will suffer. In addition, I believe that stripping outpatient services such as Assertive Community Treatment and the other outpatient services team will remove supports needed for people to remain in the community successfully. These cuts are very likely to end up costing the system more in the end, which is why these cuts are shortsighted.

In sum, I am hoping that you will reconsider these cuts, which will hurt the efforts CMHC staff, trainees, and clients make every day to help people in Connecticut. Please allow CMHC to maintain its standard of training for those of us who are passionate about delivering effective mental health care in the public sector.

Sincerely,
Sarah Robertson, PsyD